

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission**

**10th Annual Seixas Award Dinner  
Low Memorial Library at Columbia University  
New York City**

**April 27, 2010**

**On Receipt of the  
Gershom Mendes Seixas Award**

Thank you, Dean Lehecka. For so many of us you've been the heart and soul of this great school, and it's a particular honor for me to have you present this award.

Thank you to the Columbia/Barnard Hillel, and in particular Dr. Judy Schwartz and Simon Klarfeld.

Thank you Robert Kraft. We are moved by your words of unity tonight, and by your long list of stunning accomplishments, including the rebuilding of the Hillel here.

Congratulations to my longtime friend Jay Lefkowitz. Considering our somewhat divergent political paths – Jay working for Presidents Bush 41 and 43, I for President Obama and Senator Schumer -- I don't always cheer when Jay is on the winning side. But tonight is certainly not one of those times. Jay richly deserves this award, and I applaud him.

A few months ago, someone called saying they wanted to give me an award whose previous recipients include Robert Kraft, Arthur Sulzberger, Edgar Bronfman, and Herman Wouk.

My immediate thought was ... they've made a mistake.

Growing up I rooted for the Jets, not the Patriots. I read Newsday more than the New York Times. I've been very fortunate to work with Edgar Bronfman *Junior*, but have never met his father.

And then I realized. I was finally being acknowledged for something I've accomplished that I didn't know anyone knew about, but of which I'm quite proud: Reading every word of every one of Herman Wouk's great books.

*It is humbling to be associated with the incredible group of Seixas award winners.*

And it is a great honor to receive this award, knowing that I owe more than I can say to so many great people who sacrificed so much to create opportunities for me and countless others.

Great people like Gershom Seixas, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century “Patriot Preacher”. (They call him that because it’s hard to alliterate *Chazzan*. And he was of course our country’s first native-born *Chazzan*, or Cantor.)

Seixas championed American independence and individual liberty before it was fashionable, and indeed had to escape from New York to Philadelphia because of his outspokenness. (He came back. Eventually we all do.)

Seixas was instrumental in laying the foundation for the Jewish community here in our nation, here in New York, and here at Columbia.

I stand on the shoulders of people like Gershom Seixas, and I stand on the shoulders of people like my parents, immigrants who worked so hard so that I could go to a school like Columbia and who taught me the values that guide my life today.

My father, who came to the U.S. to study engineering and who worked to design a device to help blind people “read” words on paper, also taught me about the power of technology to transform lives for the better. And so the FCC plan to promote world-leading wired and wireless broadband owes more than it knows to my family’s benefitting from the existence of the United States as a free land of opportunity.

I also stand on the shoulders of my grandparents and many others like them, who escaped the Nazi terror and risked their lives to save their children.

This past January, I had the honor of being asked by President Obama to lead the U.S. delegation to the commemoration of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, where the ashes of my great-grandmother and other family members reside, along of course with those of more than one million others.

I was powerfully reminded of our obligation to remember and honor those who were killed -- by living their values, preserving their faith and traditions, and respecting the profound historical importance of the State of Israel.

For me and many others, Columbia was a place that enabled us to do so.

While also teaching us to think critically and independently.

And when you consider that Columbia educated both Jay and me, you realize that’s not just idle talk.

As we all know, college years can be as intense and stressful as they can be fun and rewarding. And so it’s hard to overstate the value of a safe haven like the Columbia/Barnard Hillel, a home away from home, a family away from family.

Now, I'll be honest; when I was at Columbia, I essentially lived not at the Hillel but at the offices of the Spectator. Although, in my defense, it was about six months before I realized that it wasn't the Hillel.

But I came to the Hillel too, for Jewish services, to get involved in community outreach projects, or sometimes just to escape.

The Hillel was a vital part of what at Columbia gave me a chance to succeed.

And so while I sincerely appreciate this honor you have given me tonight, I am much more grateful to all of you for supporting the Columbia/Barnard Hillel.

Thanks to your generosity, young people today and in the future will be able to enjoy the same support, the same sense of family – of *mishpacha* -- that enriched my life.

Thank you again, and good night.